

## VA TAP – Technology Assessment WATCH – February 2004

### ---Issue on Mental Illness Technology Assessment---

This E-mail newsletter, produced by the **VA Technology Assessment Program (VATAP)**, brings you health technology assessment (HTA) reports & resources in VA plus links to evidence-based resources from around the world: *news you can use!*

**VA TAP** produces evidence-based systematic reviews of the medical literature in response to requests for policy or clinical guidance sent through the Chief Officer of Patient Care Services. Our reports address the use of health care technologies (such as any device, process, drug, or therapeutic intervention) in the veteran population. For more information & access to all our publications, plus links to HTA resources around the world, check out the **VA TAP** websites: <http://www.va.gov/vatap> <http://vawww.va.gov/vatap>

### Recent HTA Reports From VATAP

**OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT IN SCHIZOPHRENIA, NUMBER 2 IN A SERIES: OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT IN VHA MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.** Schizophrenia is the second most common discharge diagnosis in VHA, with an average cost of \$44,000 per patient per year. The disease often interferes significantly with important aspects of young adult functional development, leading to lifelong deficits. VATAP identified schizophrenia outcomes measurement instruments that met criteria for use in VHA.

<http://www.va.gov/vatap/pubs/schizophrenia.pdf>

### Recent HTA Reports on Mental Illness From Around the Globe:

National Institute for Clinical Excellence, **NICE**, has issued guidance to the NHS in England and Wales on: **The use of olanzapine and valproate semisodium in the treatment of acute mania associated with bipolar disorder.** Listed here are key documents for this appraisal including summary documents, full reports, and information for patients, September 2003: <http://www.nice.org.uk/cat.asp?c=86769>

National Coordinating Center for Health Technology Assessment, **NCCHTA**, at the University of Southampton's Wessex Institute for Health Research & Development. **A systematic review of atypical antipsychotic drugs in schizophrenia.** This review compares the clinical effectiveness, safety, and cost-effectiveness of 'atypical' antipsychotic drugs in schizophrenia with conventional antipsychotic drugs, placebo and other atypical antipsychotic drugs. The review also investigates the response of patients with 'treatment-resistant' schizophrenia, with predominantly negative symptoms or experiencing their first episode of schizophrenia, June 2003:

[http://www.ncchta.org/ProjectData/3\\_project\\_record\\_published.asp?PjtId=1235](http://www.ncchta.org/ProjectData/3_project_record_published.asp?PjtId=1235)

Check out these web sites for news & information you can use:

### ---Let's Talk Health Care & Research Quality---

**Quality Tools.** How do we measure health care quality? Try a look at this AHRQ web site: QualityTools is a clearinghouse for practical, ready-to-use tools for measuring and

improving the quality of Americans' health care. QualityTools is sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The web site is updated weekly.  
<http://www.qualitytools.ahrq.gov/>

**Grading Research Studies a recent BMJ article, January 3, 2004:**

The widespread use of hierarchies to grade the quality of research evidence has helped raise awareness that some forms of evidence are more reliable than others. However, oversimplification when creating and applying these hierarchies have also led to misconceptions and abuses in interpreting the evidence. In particular, criteria designed to guide inferences about the main effects of treatment have been uncritically applied to questions about etiology, diagnosis, prognosis, or adverse effects. The authors discuss five issues that should be considered in any revision or alternative approach to helping practitioners to find reliable answers to important clinical questions.  
<<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/reprint/328/7430/39.pdf>>

**Another Aspect of Quality: The National Guideline Clearinghouse™**

To see what's new and/or sign up for a weekly update of new guidelines from the National Guideline Clearinghouse™ (NGC)--a public resource for evidence-based clinical practice guidelines--go to <http://www.guideline.gov/whatsnew/whatsnew.aspx>

**---Quality Counts in Health Information, Too---**

**Ever been Asked About a Shampoo that Causes Brain Tumors? Or tainted bottled water?** Well run don't walk to this site from the CDC: The **Health Related Hoaxes and Rumors site** works to separate myths, misconceptions, and rumors about food, drugs, or medical devices from the corresponding scientific truths. [http://www.cdc.gov/hoax\\_rumors.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hoax_rumors.htm)

Also, don't forget the **FDA** if you want to know which foods, drugs and medical devices are truly risky, they're still the best source: <http://www.fda.gov/>

**Have a technology question? Ask the VA Technology Assessment Program to Assist**

**To Contact Us:**

**VA Technology Assessment Program**

**Karen Flynn, Elizabeth Adams, Elaine Alligood**

**Technology Assessment Program (11T)  
Boston VA Healthcare System**

150 So. Huntington Avenue  
Boston, MA 02130 USA

Tel: 857-364-4469 Fax: 857-364-6587 E-mail: [VATAP@med.va.gov](mailto:VATAP@med.va.gov)